

### Photos

**Top:** 217 Holland St.

**Middle:** 219-221 Holland St.

**Bottom:** 223 Holland St.

## I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**Historical Context:** The earliest maps accessed to-date show that the land on which these three residential structures are built was owned by Silas H. Holland, after whom Holland Street was named. Originally trained as a carriage maker in Northboro, MA, Holland came to Somerville in 1856 and purchased the Thomas Teele farm on Broadway. In addition to his general civic engagement, Holland spent 35 years as farmer, real estate investor, politician and, ultimately, the Vice President of Somerville Savings Bank.<sup>12</sup>

The following historic maps show that, by the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area immediately around Teele Square had been divided up into dozens of housing lots, sometimes with multiple lots owned by single entities. Speculative real estate development was in full swing in Somerville during this time and the Teel Square area was no exception. At the time of his death in 1898, the land containing 217-223 Holland Street had changed ownership from Holland to “E.” or “F.” Thayer and back to Holland again. Slight changes in the property lines can also be seen.

At this time, it is unclear who owned the land at the time that 217-223 Holland Street were built. It is likely that they were built at the same time; it is fair to assume that this single, large lot was under single ownership. Given that, as of 1900, according to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, this lot remained vacant, and given that there are listed residents of 217 Holland St. as of 1917, a reasonable range for a construction date would be 1901-1916. Though the Somerville Assessor’s Database lists the construction year as 1910 and assessing databases are notoriously inaccurate, a 1910 build date is a fair estimation of a construction date, falling in the middle of the estimated range provided above.

The earliest information found to-date referencing occupants of these buildings is from WWI draft registration cards for occupants of 217 Holland Street. Stanley Kingman is listed as a Vice President of E. H. Kingman Company, a fruits and produce dealer in Faneuil Hall, Boston. John Reed’s draft registration card lists him as a Department Manager for Jordan Marsh. Later occupants of 217 included immigrants from Barbados, one of whom was self-employed as a music teacher.

The two-family building of 219-221 Holland Street in the early nineteen teens included a clerk and a waitress.

223 Holland Street census and City Directory data from the 1920s included a renting family headed by a mechanic. Other occupants of the building included a (bank) teller and shipper.

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<sup>1</sup> *Somerville Past and Present*, 1897

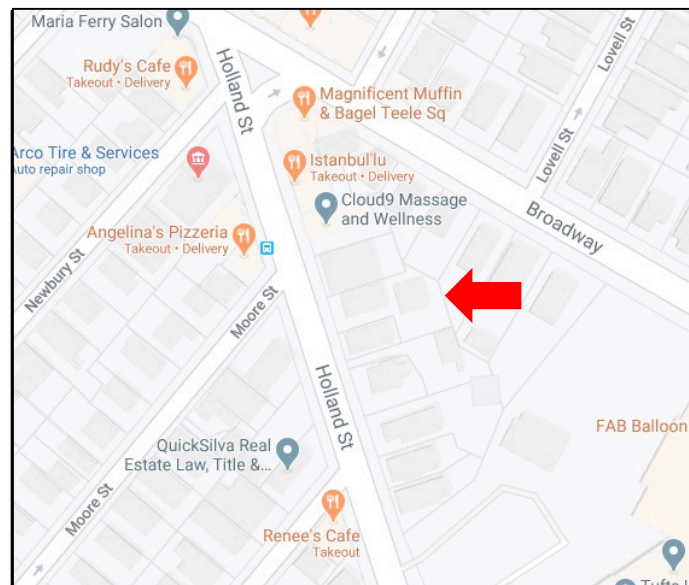
<sup>2</sup> *Somerville: Beyond the Neck*, 1990

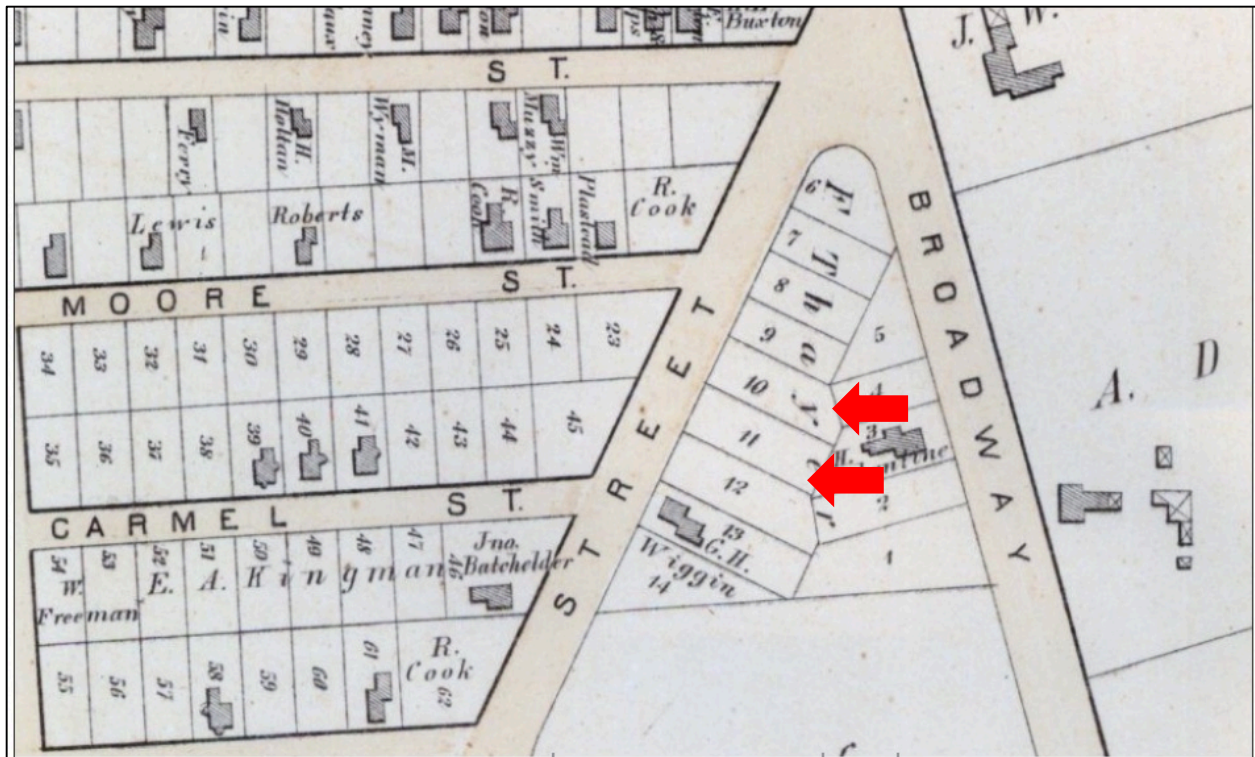




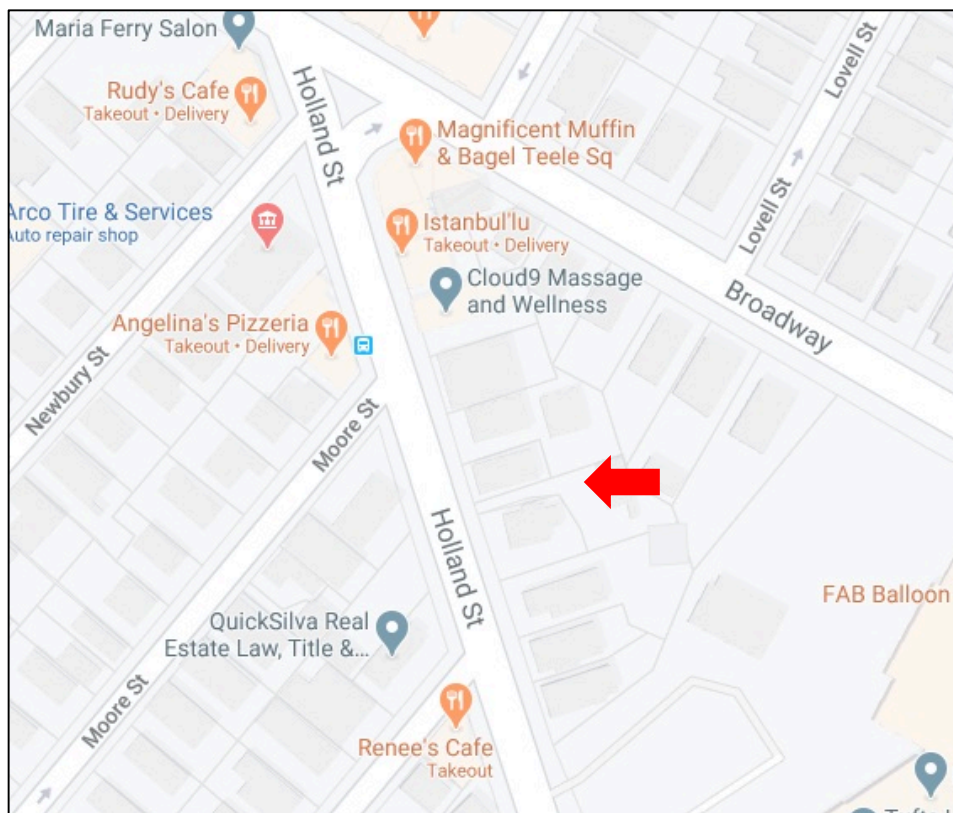
**Above:** Hopkins Plate 014, 1884.  
Lots 10 and 11 belonging to S.H.  
Holland comprise the majority of the  
217-223 Holland St. parcel today.

**Right:** The 217-223 Holland St.  
parcel today.

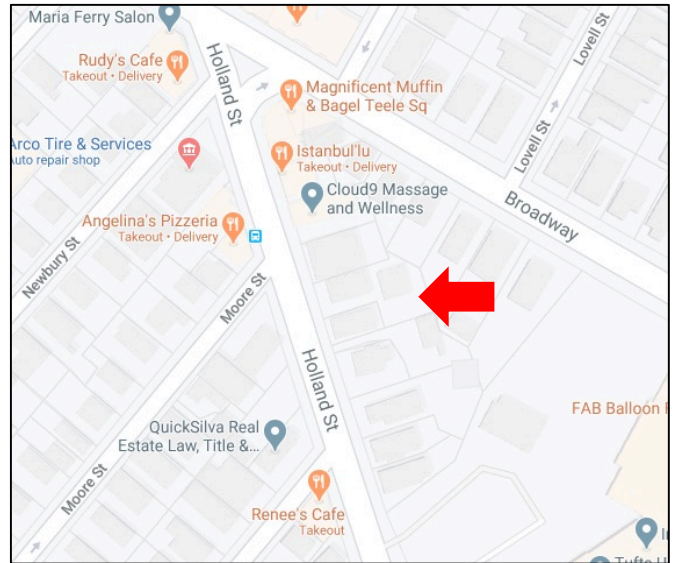
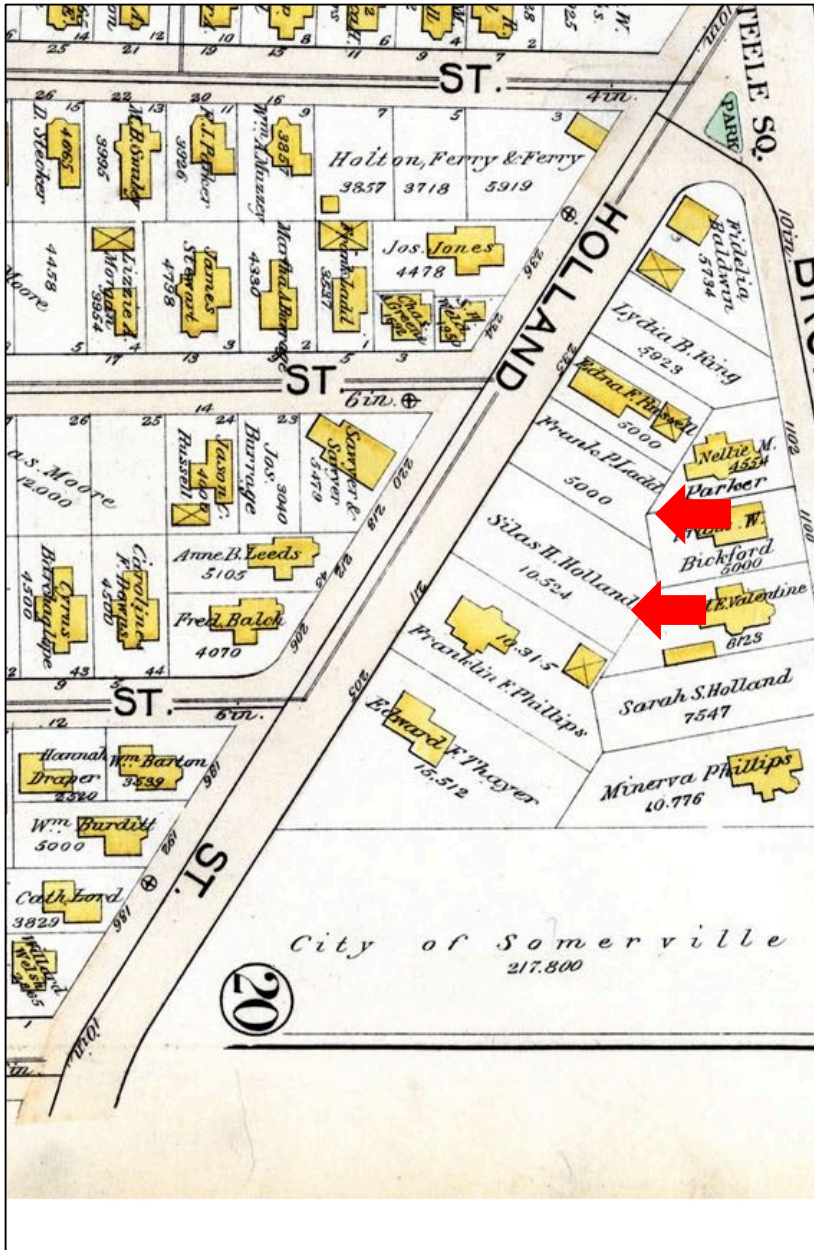




**Above:** Hopkins plate, 1894 with lots 10 and 11 forming the majority of today's 217-223 Holland St. parcel. **Below:** The 217-223 Holland St. parcel today.

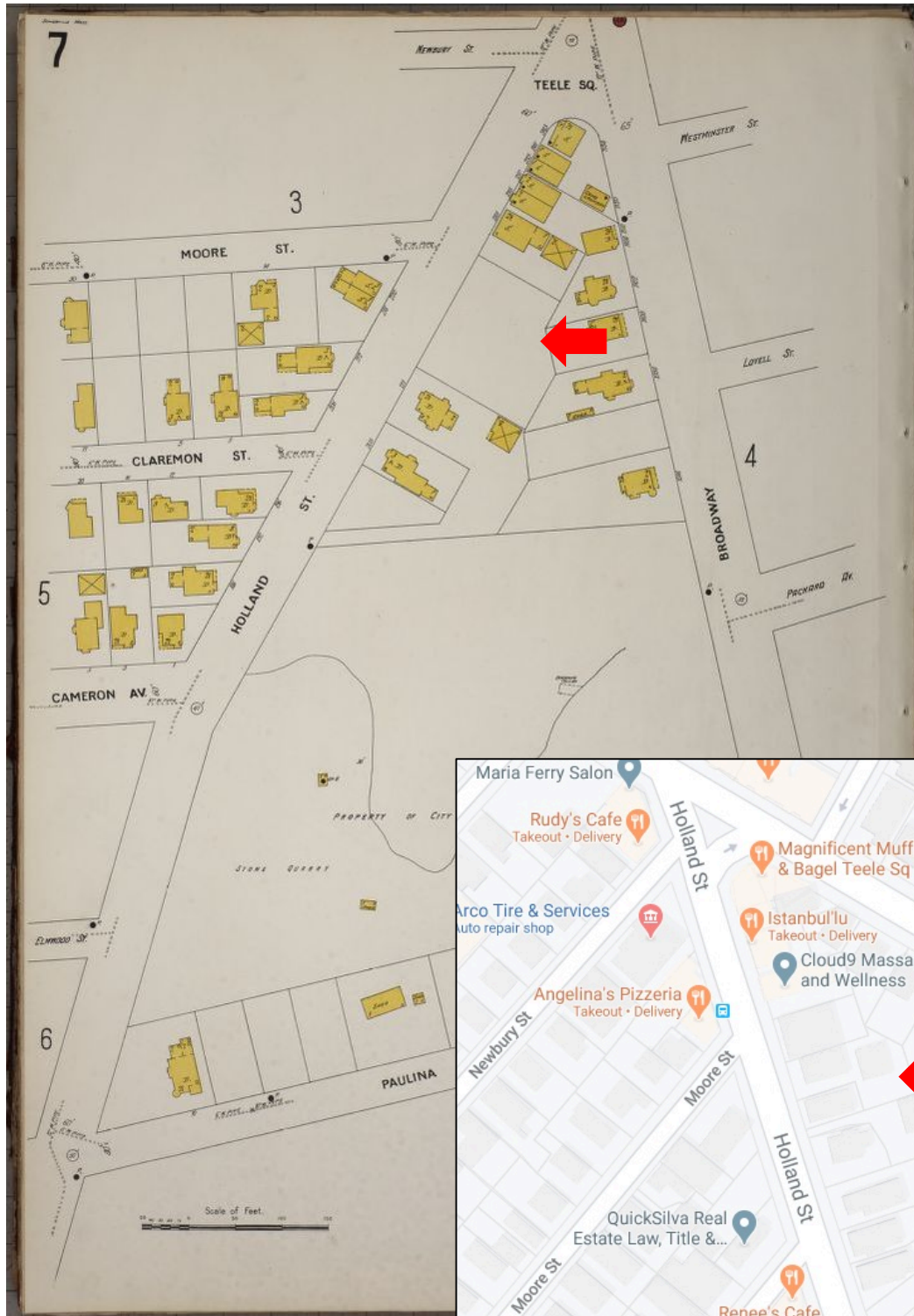






*Above, left: Bromley plate, 1895. It appears that a portion of the left-abutting lot owned by Frank P. Ladd later became part of the lot currently occupied by 217-223 Holland*

*Above, right: 217-233 Holland St. parcel today*



**Above:** Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1900. Lot lines have again changed since the 1895 Hopkins map.  
**Right:** The 217-233 Holland St. parcel today.



[illegible]



## II. HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The wood-frame, triple-decker housing form is ubiquitous in cities across New England. The greater Boston area, including Somerville, is no exception; thousands were built. The triple-decker was created, in part, to address the need for housing for working class families and for the large waves of immigrants arriving and working in urban environments.

The triple-decker provided housing that was more affordable for working-class families, sometimes providing a way to home ownership by allowing one family unit to live on one level while renting out the other two. In other instances, multiple generations of a family lived across the three-story floor plan. For still others, construction of triple-deckers was speculative real estate investment aimed at generating rental income from immigrant and working-class families.

Floor plans generally intended to provide a “parlor” at the front of a unit, followed by a dining room, kitchen, then bedrooms dispersed thereafter. A hallway running front-to-back through the unit was common. Basements were used for storage. Front and back open porches often completed the living scheme.

Over the years, the triple-decker became the scourge of popular opinion; some viewed them as “fire traps” with their wood frame construction housing multiple individuals while others viewed them negatively due to the economic status or ethnic makeup of their residents.

The importance these triple-deckers played in the complex social, cultural, and economic fabric of a city cannot be underscored enough. The following are links to articles briefly discussing this housing form, including an interview with Sally Zimmerman of Historic New England.

<https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/rise-fall-rebirth-new-england-triple-decker/>

<https://www.antiquehomesmagazine.com/reading-room/q-triple-decker-new-england-icon/>

### **Architectural Description:**

In terms of architectural form, 217 Holland Street and 223 Holland Street are mirror image triple-deckers. Each presents three stories with a flat roof, open first floor front porch, front and side three-story polygonal bays.

Foundations are stone. Window openings on the bay of 217 Holland have been changed out from the original, taller and narrower openings still seen on 223 Holland. An original narrow window remains on the flat plane of the second story at 217 while the window that would have been above has been closed up. 223 Holland Street retains its original front façade window configuration. Both 217 and 223 retain their lead-paned decorative window to the side of the single front entry door.

219-221 Holland Street is at the rear of the parcel and can be seen directly down the driveway between the two front triple-deckers. This is a two-story building. While it appears to be a triple decker that has been lost its third floor, due to its close proximity to the rear lot line and its greater width than the front buildings, it is believed that this structure was originally built with only two stories.

The building presents as a square structure with a front and side polygonal bay. The narrow size of the window openings appears to be original. A covered, open stoop presents two front doors. The foundation

is stone. The flat portion of the front façade presents two bay openings on both floors. The left elevation presents a small, low, enclosed lean-to type addition with a shed roof.

All three buildings are wood-framed, present asphalt or wood shingling on their front facades while vinyl clapboard-style siding skins the side and rear elevations, and have stone foundations.

### ***Relevant period***

- Based on research done to-date, the period of relevance for 217-223 Holland St. begins c.1901-1916.

### ***Integrity***

***The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.***

- Location:*** All three structures are believed to be in their original locations.
- Design:***
  - 217 Holland St & 223 Holland Street – triple-decker, rectangular form with front and side polygonal bays.
  - 219-221 Holland St. – two-story, square form with front and side polygonal bays.
- Materials:*** Wood frame; wood or asphalt shingles; vinyl clapboard-style siding; rubber membrane / tar and gravel roof; stone foundation; vinyl or metal replacement windows.
- Alterations:***
  - 217 Holland St. – window openings on the front bay shortened and widened; third story window on flat portion of front façade closed up; poured concrete front porch base.
  - 219-221 Holland St. – poured concrete front porch base; small, short, left elevation addition with a shed roof.
  - 223 Holland Street – poured concrete front porch base.

***Evaluation of Integrity:*** All three structures retain a high degree of architectural integrity in terms of form and design.



## **II. FINDINGS**

*For a Determination of Significance, the HPC must find the subject building to be (i) importantly associated with people, events or history and/or (ii) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i-ii).*

### **i. Historical Association**

*2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i*

*Importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*

- In addition to the Historical Association summary, Staff directs the HPC to the research table and images of census, and city directory provided for more specific information to aid in making their findings.

### **ii. Historical & Architectural Significance**

*2003-05, Section 2.17.B, ii*

*The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished.*

- In addition to the summary, Staff directs the HPC to images and map information provided to aid in making their findings.

## **V. RECOMMENDATION**

Staff offers no recommendation as to whether the three dwelling houses at 217-223 Holland Street should or should not be determined to be “historically significant”.

The HPC must make findings as to whether or not the structures meet Criteria A and/or B listed earlier in this staff report.